Cannibals Are Man's Best Friend

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/8149406.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Hannibal (TV), Doctor Who
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham/OC
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Twelfth Doctor, Clara Oswin Oswald, Will Graham's Dogs, Minor Original Characters - Character
Additional Tags:	Immortal!Will, Millions of Will Graham's Dogs, Flashbacks, Lots of Will being hurt, Doctor Who References, Don't copy to another site
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of Hannigram Big/Reverse Bangs
Collections:	2016 HBB
Stats:	Published: 2016-09-27 Words: 7,460 Chapters: 1/1

Cannibals Are Man's Best Friend

by TheSilverQueen

Summary

Will once told Hannibal, "I don't find you very interesting" because it was true. Will's lived hundreds and hundreds of years, and he won't ever die thanks to a rather meddling Time Lord, so really, no matter how crazy Hannibal is, it can't be any worse than anything Will's ever seen. Hell, Will's been burned at the stake. Hannibal couldn't possibly do anything worse to him.

Or so he thought. Now Hannibal is literally dying in front of him and Will - Will remembers the second Mire kit, the one the Doctor had said he'd need "for a friend". Will had scoffed at that idea. Now he just fumbles to use it on Hannibal and prays to a God he no longer believes in.

A Hannigram Doctor Who AU - Including AWESOME ART by mishaminion666

Notes

This is my second contribution to the 2016 Hannibal Big Bang! It was my first ever Big Bang, and I made the ambitious decision to throw myself in with two works, sooo thanks so much to lovely mods who helped get this off the ground.

Thanks to the amazing Fannibals on tumblr and telegram who gave me ideas and listened to my grumpy rants and were always there to offer a comforting shoulder when I needed it. And, you know, remind me to eat and sleep and stuff.

Many, many more thanks to my lovely artist, mishaminion666, who put up with my ramblings and delays, and still turned out this fscking gorgeous art, please go give it hugs and loves and likes because it really is amazing.

Finally, for anyone curious about the origins of the Doctor Who references: it's the season 9 two-parter "The Girl Who Died" and "The Woman Who Lived".

See the end of the work for more notes

Once upon a wibbly wobbly timey wimey time, there was a village in what would one day be called England that was threatened by space aliens claiming to be gods. The aliens pretended to be Zeus, and then Jupiter, and then Odin, and a few other ones just for fun, but the village, of course, didn't believe them and actually started shouting back critiques.

That was when the aliens decided against cosplaying as old legendary figures and thought they might as well just eradicate any evidence of their meddling.

Unfortunately for them, there was a very grumpy old alien already there who didn't really take kindly to people blowing up fellow grumpy people on a planet he'd defended for a very long time, and so he devised a plan.

(*"And what am I, chopped liver?" "Shut up, Clara, it's my story, so I'm telling it."*)

The plan involved a man – well, a young man, really, no more than two-and-twenty years old, who had an extraordinary talent for telling stories. He had blue eyes, dark brown curly hair, and a gift for understanding people and situations and animals in a way that made most people whisper "witch" as he passed. Not that he went out very much. He mostly stayed in his house, tending to his ever-growing loyal pack of mongrel mutts, who he'd coaxed out of muddy holes and swollen rivers and somehow managed to strike up a somewhat friendly relationship with. Key word being "somewhat".

(*"Just because one dog tried to bite you does not mean they're all mutts." "I'm sorry, who is telling this story again? That's right, SHUT UP." "You still deserved that bite."*)

Now the plan was very complicated, not that anyone was willing to appreciate the work of art that it was. The aliens would come down, because the witch-boy had had a defiant streak in him and insulted them and their mothers and fathers, and when they did, the villagers would be waiting. They'd record everything, of course, for posterity and blackmail and late night re-watchings. But the key to the whole plan wasn't the inability of the people here to fight – (*"Doctor, don't be rude."*) or the inability of the people to act – (*"I'd like to see you put on a good act!*) it was the witch-boy. See, the witch-boy had what none of the other people had, which is why he was considered a witch: he had imagination. Loads of it. He could see one blink of a woman's eye and realize that she was bluffing – (*"Hey, he called your bluff with the yo-yo too!"*) – or one drop of blood and imagine everything that had caused the blood to fall. It made him a marvelous storyteller, because really, the real reason fantasy sells so well is because most people can't imagine it and storytellers take advantage, as they should (*"I know you have a stash of Harry Potter in the TARDIS library too."*).

Anyways, so the aliens came down and found themselves facing a fearsome enemy – a great red dragon, with blood for wings and fire for eyes and great black horns that stretched to the sky with a roar loud enough to cause anyone's ears to pop. It had smoke and fire in its mouth and all around was a great sight.

The aliens didn't think so. Most of them just fled.

After the aliens were sent packing, there was much celebration, of course. The plan worked perfectly.

(*"Well, not all of it."*)

Okay, so . . . not all of it. The witch-boy, with his brilliant eyes and brilliant heart and imagination so great he'd formed a great red dragon out of a paper and wood sculpture – he didn't quite make it. He'd put his whole heart and soul and will into bringing it to life, and in return, he'd paid the price that all humans pay.

Which is death, obviously.

They pay other prices too, like illness and misery and people trying to poison them with apples and yoghurt, but in this particular scenario it was death.

(*"And now you ruined the flow of the story. Well done, Doctor. They all knew it was death."*)

And the Doctor looked at the life that had perished, and realized that he'd done his job. He'd saved the village. He'd driven off the intruders. Humans would live on in blissful ignorance. The earth was safe.

Except.

Except this face.

And he'd remembered an age-old wound, still tender to the touch with memories and pain, and remembered, *Just save one.*

So he'd ripped apart the helmet that had drained the life of a witch-boy and extracted a repair kit. Out of this instrument of death, there was one tiny glimpse of life, and it was that glimpse that the Doctor shoved into the witch-boy's heart.

And so everybody lived. Just this once, everybody lived.

Well, not quite.

Because the Doctor predicted all the avenues, as he always does – (*"No, you don't, you just have a time machine to go back and fix the problem."*) – and so he understood that one day that witch-boy would be an old, old, old witch-boy, and he'd outlive everything he'd know and love and hate in equal measure until one day he might wish that he could rip that repair kit right back out. But the repair kit would keep on regenerating him, and humans aren't like Time Lords. They're like TARDISes. They grieve and mourn and sometimes when they can't live any longer alone, they simply cease to exist.

So the Doctor gave the witch-boy a second dose. Just one.

And when the witch-boy says, "What's this for?" the Doctor tells him, "For a best friend. Not a friend, because not every friend is the kind you can live without for as long as I've lived without wanting to throw down a black hole, and no, I'm not stopping to tell you what a black hole is so just listen. Not a friend. A best friend."

The witch-boy says, “Why?”

The Doctor says, “Because being alone is sometimes the worst thing in the universe. You shouldn’t be alone.”

And the witch-boy says, “It doesn’t happen to work on dogs, does it?”

The Doctor says, “What? No, of course not, forget about the dogs. Whoever you want, wherever you are, whenever you are – remember. A best friend.”

The witch-boy was raised with some manners, so he politely says thank you, shakes the Doctor’s hand, and puts the second dose on a string, to remember, and goes to live out his second chance at life. And the Doctor packs up and leaves, a job well done.

(*“So . . . what did happen to Will?”*

“Who’s Will?”

“The guy you’ve been referring to as ‘witch-boy’ in order to add a ‘sense of mystery’.”

“Oh, him. I don’t know. That was ten minutes ago, I’ve got other things to worry about.”)

At first, Will keeps an ever-expanding group of social friends who keep trying to wrangle the repair chip out of him. It’s men, women, and everyone else trying to talk and flirt and subtly edge their way into his mind, and the worst part is, they do get in. There’s so many minds that people start blending together, until one day he opens the door and says, “Hello, Martha” and Marie takes one look and backs away. Thankfully, it puts an end to all the marriage requests by overbearing fathers.

After that, Will keeps dogs.

Dogs are simple, and carefree, and loving. Will gives them attention and food, and they shower him in licks and fur and whines. Soon it’s like he’s some kind of dog god, since they kind of appear from nowhere to become part of his pack, until he’s actually forced to leave his village because his pack actually outnumbers the villagers. Not that they’re sorry to see him go, of course. The “witch” insult didn’t die just because he saved their lives, and most of the people he saved are long gone now, of course. It’s their grandchildren and great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren who now take up the role of throwing sticks and stones, so one day Will just packs up, whistles, and leaves the village with a seemingly never-ending trail of dogs behind him.

The thing is, though, Will’s got a really good memory. One day, he will call it almost eidetic, but right now, it’s just really good. So he remembers every single dog he’s had – their favorite toy, their favorite type of food, their favorite place to itch and pet.

Except one day, a shaggy golden dog comes up to him and he says, “Oh, hello, there, Abby” and it’s not.

It’s not Abby.

It's Winston.

After that, Will keeps journals. Lots and lots of journals.

Because the thing is, no matter how good your memory is, time can erode all things. And that repair kit only repairs, it doesn't expand. In quick succession, Will forgets the name of his childhood crush (Ally), the name of his village (Grantham), the name of his father (John), the name of the woman who helped save him (Clara), and the names of many, many of his dogs. Soon, the only reason he remembers his name is Will is that it's the name of some of the dog tags on his pack's collars, and sometimes, he even has to string it alongside the second repair kit otherwise he forgets every other decade or so.

Will would be sad about this if he could remember, but he doesn't.

Like clockwork, he relearns the joys of getting a new dog and falling in love, the heartaches of death and loss, the irritation of illness and injury, the hatred towards the bigoted and the greedy, the calm of rainy days and warm fires. He even relearns that he can fish and hunt and sew clothing and write and garden, once he has the proper tools in his hands.

At one point, he even debates changing his name.

After all, considering he no longer remembers the Will or the Graham, who is Will Graham?

But every morning he gets up and sees the name tag "Will" next to a Mire repair kit, and he swallows the urge and still calls himself "Will Graham". Even if the spelling changes a bit from time to time, so that he doesn't run into problems with censuses.

He never does give out that second dose though. Although he no longer remembers why, he knows instinctively that it is something he won't wish upon just anyone.

Even if Will does wish he could give it to one of his dogs.

Will really doesn't like Jack Crawford. Jack is pushy and single-minded, and Will's long since learned that the repair kit makes Will reckless, because he knows that no matter how much his nightmares plague him, they won't kill him, and living while victims die always weighs on his mind. So when Jack pushes, Will gives, because in those pushy moments, Will is more Jack-Will than Will-Will, because the repair kit might not expand his mind, but it definitely strengthened his empathetic abilities.

However, Jack – for all his pushiness – is not the reason Will agrees to join the Chesapeake Ripper case.

The Chesapeake Ripper is the reason Will joins the Chesapeake Ripper case.

Just from one photograph, Will was actually shocked – and that's something that hasn't happened in decades. Will moved into teaching because yes, he failed to shoot once, but also because being a detective was attracting too much attention. Humanity is prone to patterns,

and killers are no exception. Will was getting too good at closing cases, and not all of it could be laid at the door of his empathy.

Besides, “disability” is said to his face the same way “witch” was once, and that, too, is a pattern he’s grown tired of.

But the Ripper was something new. Will had never felt such . . . such *disdain* before, in a murder, if that’s possible. Disdain and pride and satisfaction. He’s felt a one or two or a combination of two before, but never at the same time. The Ripper is a first because he or she considers their victims so below them that the pride comes before the disdain, the satisfaction before the annoyance. It’s like the Ripper is a God, and his victims are little tiny snails to be crushed underfoot and ground up into paint for beautiful art displays, with no tears shed because who sheds tears over materials for art?

Or.

Or like the Ripper is an immortal Doctor, and his victims are monsters that no one else can see, because no one else has lived long enough to see the patterns of where monsters start quite like he has.

Not every monster is born one. In fact, Will’s seen enough to say that most aren’t. And who better than to interfere than someone who claims to have the ability to time travel? Will’s been limited to what he can reach by foot or horseback or telegram. Or, in modern times, by boat or plane or train or e-mail.

Besides, Will knows better than anyone that doctors can cause just as much harm as anyone else.

Also, that doctor bit really comes back to bite him in unexpectedly painful ways.

My name’s Will, a little boy says.

I don’t care, says an old grumpy Doctor.

I think you do. I think you’re interesting, the little boy tells him

And I don’t find you that interesting at all, says the Doctor.

But maybe you will, the little boy insists.

And most likely, I won’t. Shoo! the Doctor shouts.

“I don’t find you that interesting,” Will says, and takes a bite of his scrambled eggs, which are admittedly really good. Even better than his own, and Will’s had quite a few ages to practice.

“You will,” Hannibal says, and smiles while Will shivers with long ago memories he no longer properly recalls.

Part One: Forged in Fire (My Privilege to Light the Flames)

The first time Will "dies", it's an actual fire.

Will predicts a solar eclipse, because he's seen it happen lots of times before, only not quite enough times to realize that he should let the town he's in carry on with their little rituals of appeasing the sun and moon gods. He's bored and someone insults his dogs, so he retaliates by predicting – correctly, he might add – the next two eclipses because really, get a grip. It's the sun and moon moving, it's not the end of the world requiring three tons of food and wine poured everywhere, although at least they aren't one of the villages that demands blood sacrifices and virgins on the altar.

The village retaliates by hanging him until he's too blue in the face to keep shouting out predictions, and then tying him to a stake and burning him alive.

And it hurts.

By god it hurts. The repair kit is healing, but only as fast as the fire is consuming, and Will wonders for a delirious second if maybe this is the end, if the repair kit runs out of power and he just keeps healing long enough to burn even longer until he's just a burning pile of bones that never goes out like some twisted fulfillment of everlasting fire.

Thankfully, after about half a sun's turn, the people get quite scared of his constant screaming and everyone abandons the town, just in time for a gigantic rainstorm.

For the next hundred years, Will refuses to have any less than ten feet between him and any source of fire, and it takes quite a long time for him to get used to even the idea of electricity. He flatly refuses to go anywhere near the ring of fire, anyways, no matter how much he wants to travel.

Will isn't sure whether this is worse or better than the second time, where there is fire eating away inside at the nooks and crannies of his own damn brain.

He screams this time too, but unlike before, there's no villagers booing at him or flinching back from his screams, because now the screams are so internal that no one can hear. The repair kit heals him and keeps him from getting sick from all his sweat and vomiting, but in his delirium, instead of wondering if the repair kit might run out of power, for the first time he prays that it might.

Anything to relieve the burning that's consuming his mind, his last fort in the world.

Because, see, the thing about the repair kit is that it's not a particularly fast healing mechanism. In fact, Will's fairly certain the Doctor turned the rate down a little bit or maybe it's because he's not the same kind of alien as the repair kit was originally designed for, but whatever the case, it heals faster – much faster – than normal, but not quite so fast that if someone stuck a knife in his eyes he'd be fine and dandy in two minutes like those ridiculous comic book superheroes.

So since the encephalitis isn't outright killing him, all the repair kit is doing is merely . . . keeping pace. Keeping him alive, half in between death and life like he was on that damn pyre.

Sometimes, in the darkest, deepest grip of his nightmares, Will wonders if this will be his end, this man-made fire in his brain. After all, the repair kit has shown no signs of being able to repair his mind, given all the gaping holes in his memory, and the body can exist without a mind. The repair kit will keep his heart beating and lungs moving, and he wonders if that might be his fate – to cease to exist the same way he had under the helmet, but far worse, because he'd be Will Graham the body without Will Graham the mind, and to be honest, he, unlike every other human facing the prospect of a long-term vegetative state, has no back-up recourse. So Will sweats and shivers and hallucinates, and each day new day is a flip of a coin over whether his mind will survive.

When it's over, due to the flood of medicines drowning inside of his internal organs, he wonders how long it'll take him to get over his fear of fire for a second time.

Part Two: I Gave You a Child, If You'll Recall (No More Babies For Me)

Eventually, the decades of loneliness get to Will.

He doesn't remember having a family, but he also doesn't remember how his village drove him away. So all he can go off of is the distant yearning whenever he sees families together at the farmers' markets or swimming on the beaches or simply spending time together. He misses talking. He hasn't talked to anybody in a long, long time, because after an eternity of being by yourself, well, your own voice gets really rather tiring.

So he surprises himself. Takes some money out, buys a new suit, sees a few shows. Chats to a few women.

Will doesn't remember learning this language, of angling hips and eyebrows or toasting with winks and drinks or quirking smiles and shedding clothes to lure in partners, but his body remembers, and he simply smiles and goes with it.

A year later, he settles down with a really lovely woman named Margot, who has a large family of brothers and sisters who welcome Will too. Their children – his new nieces and nephews, lots of them – love the fact that Will is a dog whisperer and has lots of dogs to boot. Her parents welcome him as a new son and shower him with food and praise. And on the day Margot gives birth to a tiny girl they call Gael, Will thinks he's never been this proud of anything, ever, and stubbornly refuses to consider the fact that this might be because he no longer remembers everything he's ever done.

Then the sickness strikes.

Years later, he will never be able to read or learn about the Black Plague again without a distant shudder and prickling tears in the back of his eyes, but for now, it's just a sickness. At first it's a cough, and then quite suddenly it's a week later and half the town is rotting in the streets.

Will gets sick. Margot cries.

Then he gets better, but nothing else does. Will's nieces and nephews waste away, one by one, followed by their parents. Even his loving in-laws die, one noisy night with groaning in the streets and wailing in the neighboring houses. Will clutches Gael close and fretfully checks her breathing every ten minutes, terrified and shaking, as his dogs whimper in the death throes or take off into the countryside.

For the first time, he considers the second dose.

In the morning, though, he wakes to find Margot dead, collapsed on the floor, and in between the time he spends running to her, shaking her, and realizing she is dead, Gael passes away with naught but a quiet wisp of last breath to note her passing.

Will burns the house, after, in a fit of rage. He burns the second dose too, because what good is it to be saved for a best friend when he couldn't even save his own daughter?

However, when he comes back a month later, when the sickness has moved on to claim other towns and countries, he finds that hateful second kit gleaming among the ashes. For the next century, he will not wear it around his neck, and he does not seek out any woman or man for companionship. There will be no more babies for him, he vows, because no one can replace Gael and what she meant for him.

This is why Will is so taken aback at the strength of Garret's imprint on his mind. Normally, although he has difficulty, he can shed away the minds and vile thoughts of killers past, mainly because in reality, he's gotten quite good at selective forgetting. He's going to lose memories anyways, he rationalizes, so why not dump the killers and keep the puppies?

Garret Jacob Hobbs, though.

He stays, day in and day out, no matter how many times Will hits the proverbial empty trash button in his mind.

And day in and day out, Will feels the drive to protect his-Garret's-their daughter. To add insult to injury, Abigail even looks like Gael – or rather, what she might have looked like, dark hair and blue eyes and sweet innocence, and to Will's imagination, she is like his daughter reincarnated, a second chance at protecting what he failed to the first time. And he orphaned her, so by rights, he reasons, he should take care of her.

So he tries, clumsily, because although he remembers exactly how Gael felt as she coughed and died, he doesn't remember how he changed her underclothes or sang to her or fed her. He just remembers the frantic struggle for anything that might save her, and so, he tries, desperately and frantically, to do anything that might save Abigail.

Yet deep in his heart, all he can imagine is Gael, lying dead in the floor, swaddled in blankets and bereft of life, and inwardly he wonders, if he couldn't even keep a baby alive, how can he keep alive a teenager?

This is probably why, when Hannibal slits Abigail's throat, Will feels no rage.

Rage, he left behind with Gael.

Now, with Abigail gasping, all left is the aching grief and guilt of survival, and it's even more tortuous. What he would have given for Gael to gasp and whimper and struggle as Abigail has, so that he could have known she was leaving and comforted her as she passed. And what he would give, now, for his second daughter to die as Gael did, in her sleep with no pain or tragedy to mark her passing.

What he would give, for either daughter, to have the chance to press a repair kit to their heart and embrace immortality with them together.

Will presses his hands to Abigail's throat and cries. He hasn't worn his repair kit around his neck in a long time, because modern society thinks it's too feminine and because he wanted psychiatrists to stop asking about it. So all he can do is weep, and press shaking fingers to the gushing blood, and lay his head on the floor as Gael and Abigail slip into oblivion on either side of him.

Part Three: I Am Flesh And Blood (But All You See Is A Ghost)

Will and science have always had a bad relationship, and it's stretched all the way to the early days. For example, he had the misfortune to run afoul of a very curious scientist back in the fifteenth century. Later on, he will hear of the scorn brought on by Leonardo da Vinci's experiments during that same time period, and he will laugh, because what he went through is much, much worse.

He wakes up with a terrible headache to find himself with his belly slashed wide open and a startled scientist with a knife in hand, because of course the repair kit healed him faster and therefore the drugs didn't keep him under long enough.

Unfortunately, that repair kit does not do anything for the solid lengths and coils of rope that bind him to the basement.

For weeks and weeks, the scientist descends into the basement every night, like clockwork, to try something new. Will learns what's like to lose skin and fingers and toes, although the scientist is too cautious to lop a whole limb off. He also finds himself desperate for food and water, and in the deepest, darkest parts of his mind, he remembers the terrible pang of an empty stomach and a dry throat and relives it all over again. He drowns and burns, suffocates and hyperventilates, seizes and faints. It all begins to blur, over and over, until suddenly the torture stops.

For three days, he's given adequate clothes, food, and water, and he's too hungry to even question it.

That's when the scientist says, "So, you're immortal, Will Graham? How interesting, the things you babble on about in your delirious state. I do wonder whether this . . . what did you call it? Ah yes, whether this 'repair kit' is transferable. For purely scientific curiosity of course."

For the first time, Will feels the calling darkness of all the killers he's ever witnessed grow so loud that he sinks willingly down.

When the scientist returns with the biggest saw he's ever seen, Will closes his eyes, takes a deep breath, and opens them to become someone else entirely, the strangler, the biter, the reaper, every single killer he's ever known who faced overwhelming odds and yet felt no fear. He is the werewolf crouching in the tall trees, the vampire lurking in the shadows, the dragon who breathes fire yet never burns. In the distance, he can feel blood running down his face and a radiating pain as the scientists digs into his head, but it's very much in the distance. What trouble is pain, when he is Death, in every incarnation he's ever known, and for one single second, he and it and they are one.

Together, they lean up, close their teeth around the scientist's throat, and *rip*.

Will leaves the house after time wears away the rope enough for him to stagger away. He leaves the rotting corpse behind, as well as whatever was left of his innocence. He is apart from humanity now, and humanity is separate from him, and without that distance, Will knows that killers will be begin clawing up from the depths of his mind.

Compared to that, letting Hannibal take a saw to his forehead is a dream.

The saw is better at cutting through skin and bone than the crude instrument the last scientist wielded, and it's being utilized by someone much more skilled. The pain is dull, not just because of Will's demons dragging him under, but because Hannibal has given him drugs. And best of all, there are no competing voices from the Copycat and Garret Jacob Hobbs and the Mushroom Man clamoring for a spot in his head.

Will just leans back and lets *Hannibal* swallow him whole.

If Hannibal finds the kit, why not? He won't know what it is, and Will's never written it down. He carries that secret tucked away in the bleeding underbelly of his heart and mind.

He wishes, fiercely, that he could summon the strength to speak. He knows now that Hannibal and him are too conjoined to separate, but he has something to offer than no one can. He can offer Hannibal food to sate the belly of the beast, and he is the never ending spark to fan the flames of that destruction. He can give Hannibal his heart and his mind and every part in between, a thousand times over and more, and in the back part of his mind, he wonders how terrible it would be, to live as one half of a soul when time inevitably drags Hannibal down into the dark depths of death.

He wonders, how terrible would it be, really, to unleash an immortal reaper onto the earth, another inhuman to keep an inhuman company.

Part Four: One Raindrop Raises The Sea (And God Said, Take Two Creatures)

Will doesn't actually think twice about leaning forward and sending them over the cliff. After all, it's not like he hasn't fallen off cliffs before. He has, both for recreational purposes and . .

. well, not so fun purposes. And it isn't even his first time voluntarily jumping off either. Sometimes to lose your hunter, you have to take risks, and Will's great at taking risks.

Case of risk in point: Hannibal fricking Lecter.

However, he's never jumped off with another person before.

So when Hannibal jolts in his arms as they smack into the sea, Will is startled. He'd entirely relaxed, except for the iron bands of his arms around his other half, because he's jumped off enough times to remember that the first shock of hitting the water is always the worst. It's an automatic reaction to kick off his shoes, hold his breath, and begin the arduous process of struggling to the surface, even though he's hindered by the gaping pain in his arm.

Thankfully, Hannibal – although maybe not as experienced as Will – is still the sensible person that he's always been.

Hannibal is the one to lock a strong arm around his waist and begin propelling them to the surface. When they reach it, Hannibal is the one who braces him against the cliff wall, shielding him from the pounding waves. And as they slowly scrabble alongside it, it's Hannibal who is losing skin and nail and blood to the unforgiving cliff face.

This is probably why Will falls unconscious.

It might also be because healing takes a *lot* of energy, and the repair kit burns through a lot of healing really, really fast.

In any case, when Will wakes up, it's to gentle waves lapping at his feet and the sun shining on his face. His immediate reaction is to touch his cheek, where the great red dragon shoved glass into his mouth, but it's already healed, and so is his arm. He feels a great swell of relief at that, because the thing about the repair kit is that since it's located in his head, short of allowing himself to die, he can influence it.

For example, the smile Hannibal gave him is still there.

Will lay on that floor in Hannibal's kitchen and wanted that scar, viscerally, and although the repair kit healed all the damage, the thin white line remains. This time, he has a line on his cheek to match the smile on his stomach.

Which is when he realizes that Hannibal hasn't moved or said anything.

When Will looks around, frantic, he sees Hannibal about three feet from him, above his head, collapsed face down as though he'd dragged Will out and then lost all will or energy to move. True to form, Hannibal had put everything into saving Will and then nothing for himself, because the man believes he can adapt to everything.

Will climbs clumsily towards him, feeling battered and every one of his thousands and thousands of years. He has to work his mouth and throat a few times, because at first all that comes out is a coarse puff of air. Finally, though, Will manages to croak out, "Hannibal?"

Hannibal doesn't react.

Will feels his heart start to race. Hannibal considers himself the apex predator, the top of food chain, and he keeps himself in exquisite shape and awareness. Even branded and beaten by Verger's goons, Hannibal had found the strength and the will to bludgeon half of the men to death, fight Cordell to submission, carve off the man's face, do Doctor knows what to Mason himself, and then carry Will half the way to Wolf Trap in the snow. Will's learned not to underestimate just how strong and powerful Hannibal is the same way he learned not to underestimate the power of fear and anger and rage.

Another few scrambles in the sand put his hand near Hannibal's neck, and that's when he realizes that Hannibal has no pulse.

For a second, it doesn't make sense.

Hannibal's not immortal, but for some reason, Will never imagined outliving him. It was a cat and mouse game, yes, but one where the cat and mouse dealt mortal wounds, and both died or lived together.

Then it's a mad rush to turn Hannibal over, and Hannibal's so heavy and Will so weak that it takes an agonizing decade to get his hands under Hannibal properly, another cringe worthy century to lift him up, and then a terrifying thousand years to actually get him flipped over. His fingers shake and flutter over Hannibal's pulse, because he's terrified of hurting him, even though there's no pulse and he can't hurt him, and for a long moment, Will can't tell whether it's his heart that is racing or Hannibal's.

Finally, though, he has to admit it.

Hannibal is dead.

His promise to Jack is fulfilled. His vow to Alana is fulfilled. His dying wish to Abigail is complete.

And yet.

Yet he still wonders: Is it worse to live forever with half a soul, knowing what he could have had, or to live on as one merged monster, darker than the darkest nightmares he's ever had?

Half a soul forever or two much of one soul?

And that's when Will says, screw it. He's given everything to this world. One life, two lives, three lives, many and many and many lives, over and over, and that doesn't even count the dogs and wives and sons and daughters and nieces and nephews and neighbors and friends he's held back, not saved, grieved in the corner. Who cares about what he'll unleash? He might unleash it anyways, lost as he is, knowing that he'll forever be wandering as half of a perfect soul. The world will be drowned or exploded one day, anyways, and Will doubts he'll survive that because Noah's Ark won't work twice, so why not take a friend with him to cling to as the waters swallow them?

The Doctor said that to be alone is the worst thing ever, which is why he needs a best friend, and Will doesn't have a best friend.

Will has the other half of his soul.

So Will says to hell with the universe, yanks the repair kit off his neck, and plants it straight into Hannibal's heart.

Part Five: Epilogue

When Will wakes up for the next time, it's to one of the most gorgeous sights he's ever seen.

Hannibal is standing at the doorway of their cabin, dressed in nothing but shorts, hair flying all over his face from the sea breeze, shamelessly admiring himself in the mirror. The sun has almost entirely risen to midday, so it's bright and golden all over Hannibal's skin, and it's a smooth muscled expanse of back that is all Will can see.

"I never took you for a narcissist," Will says lazily.

Hannibal twists smoothly around and arches an eyebrow at him. "It is not narcissism if you're re-learning your body," he replies.

Will pushes the covers off and goes to fling himself at Hannibal like a living body pillow. Hannibal accepts his weight without even the slightest groan or flinch, and Will hides his smile in Hannibal's shoulder.

For the longest moment, on that beach of sand and waves, Will had thought that the repair kit had failed to work. That Hannibal had been gone too long, and Will hadn't put the repair kit in time. That after all this time, maybe the repair kit no longer worked, especially considering all the abuse Will had put it through. Or maybe, worse of all – that what the repair kit might bring back might not be Hannibal at all, and Will might have to kill a fellow immortal. And then Will would have to go on knowing that he'd failed anyways, and live alone again with that guilt.

So yes. Will has quite a few reasons to smile.

Or rather, he has one.

Doesn't mean he won't take advantage of the opportunity to relearn Hannibal's body as well.

"So," Hannibal says after a long, lazy moment, "are we going to discuss my miraculous recovery or are you going to make me guess?"

"Er," is all that comes out of Will's mouth. He'd been so relieved that Hannibal had lived that he hadn't stopped to actually explain what was going on as they stumbled off the beach and stolen the first boat Hannibal hadn't turned his nose up.

"No words from you?" Hannibal tsks and turns to pull Will even closer, so that he can feel their hearts beating together in perfect rhythm. "Did you trade my life for your tongue?"

Will runs his hands down Hannibal's back and realizes that the jig is up. The Verger brand is almost entirely gone from Hannibal's back, and if he wasn't running his fingers up and down

the man's back, he wouldn't have even been able to tell there was a brand there in the first place. There's no way he can explain away *that* as a miracle, the same way Hannibal had thought it was when his eyes had first flew open and he'd coughed up what seemed like a gallon of water, spluttering and flinching as Will hauled them up and in search of a place to flee, too filled with relief to bother with storytelling.

"It's kind of . . . a long story," he says finally.

"We are dead men, you and I, and there are so many more places that I want to show you," Hannibal tells him, eyes bright and smile soft. "We have all the time in the world, my Will."

"My Hannibal," Will says, and it's the strangest flutter he's ever felt, saying that, "you have no idea."

Once in the present, not really that far away, a Time Lord with a time machine lands on a space yacht. It's called *Harmony and Redemption*, and the Time Lord curses, but it's like not he can do anything, really. The navigation circuits are pretty fried and actually there's a huge dent in the floor and oh, there's smoke too. Lots of smoke.

So the Time Lord sighs and adjusts his suit and steps out. In the veritable sea of beings, he doesn't really stand out.

And why should he? This is the ship reserved for race-eaters and planet-burners and star-devourers and universe-destroyers. The Time Lord has done all those things and much, much more, so in every way, he fits right in.

Plus, the TARDIS key also makes him unremarkable to most passersby.

And anyways, the Time Lord has no intention of staying too long anyways. This ship is due for a very deadly collision and crash shortly, one that he is responsible for, so in the interest of not crossing his own time stream and creating a paradox, he doesn't plan to stay long at all. He also has no intention of warning the crew or passengers, but again – race-eaters and planet-burners. Time won't mourn these folks.

In any case, all of that is why he's rather startled when up pops a young man with chocolate curls and bright blue eyes, tie askew, dog fur on his pants, and he says, "Hello, Doctor."

"Busy, good-bye," says the Doctor.

But the young man is persistent, and hangs on. "Doctor."

"Do I know you? Because I am rather busy, you know."

The young man smiles, but it's a painful smile. Good pain and bad pain, old emotions colliding with new thoughts, a painful blend of the end of a mission and the start of a new one. Old eyes in a young face. The Doctor is all too familiar with that.

"My name is Will Graham," says the young man. "Do you remember me?"

The Doctor thinks of a great red dragon with fire for breath and wings of blood. He thinks of hurled insults and people spitting at feet. He thinks of a cooling corpse, face pale and drained of blood, curls flopping against the grass. He says, “No, sorry, who are you?”

The young man releases him. “It’s okay,” he says, too confidently, too smoothly, suddenly all too concerned with brushing away the dog fur. “I started forgetting too, not that long afterwards.”

“Forgetting what?”

“Everything,” the young man says. “But I am glad I remembered your advice. Or perhaps it was a life lesson, painfully learned the hard way?”

The Doctor thinks of drum beats in the dark. “Nope, wrong person, definitely not me.”

Another man cuts in suddenly, but smoothly, with the grace of complete self-confidence. His hair is slicked back, his suit pressed and fitted, his movements smooth and graceful. There’s something incredibly familiar about his face, and even more familiar about the way he winds an arm around the young man, glass in hand and a calculating look on his eyes.

“I see you’ve found a friend,” says the newcomer. “Would you mind introducing us?”

“Hannibal,” says the young man, and now his voice is softer, yet conversely, more confident. There is ease there, familiarity, friendship. Devotion, admiration, respect. Layers and years and space, all coming together to build –

The first rocks hit, and the ship rocks. It is the beginning of the end, although nobody else knows it. The newcomer nearly drops his glass, but only because he clings tighter to the young man.

A discreet alert signals, and the newcomer looks at his wrist. “We may need to acquire a different ride home,” he says with a sigh.

“Hannibal, no.”

“Well, I imagine that once the hull is breached, we might not be the only ones scavenging,” the newcomer predicts. “Unless you have a suggestion to offer?”

The young man looks at the oldest man. The immortal and the man always reborn, locking eyes, a silent message.

“I think we might have another way out,” the young man says, and he reaches out, the same way he first did, fingers trembling but hands steady, eyes beseeching, a story within a story within a story, a future bright and dark and clouded and twisted. The ink dry in some parts and not even loaded in others.

The Doctor thinks of a woman in a library, dressed in an astronaut suit. He thinks of a woman, ticking numbers on her neck and a raven cawing. He thinks of a woman, with a brain unmatched only by her heart. “Just one,” the woman says, fingers trembling but hands steady,

eyes beseeching, a story within a story within a story, fixed point and fluid time in one body. “Just save one.”

“Run,” the Doctor says, and they do.

Later, as they spin off into the distance, the Doctor will realize why the newcomer is so familiar.

“I TOLD YOU TO SAVE IT FOR A BEST FRIEND AND YOU USED IT ON THE CHESAPEAKE RIPPER?!”

“Best friend, mortal enemy,” the young man says with a shrug, watching the newcomer prowl around the ship, eyes wide and keen, fingers twitching as he builds a new room in his mind. “They’re one and the same, in the end, Doctor.”

The Doctor thinks of drumbeats on repeat and robots going to heaven. Best friend, mortal enemy, indeed.

He still strands them on a planet system without space travel though.

FINIS

End Notes

I hope you enjoyed all of that, especially the Doctor-voice in the beginning, because it was a really interesting style to write in.

Again, thanks to the mods of the Hannibal Big Bang for dealing with my constant barrage of questions and e-mails with grace and efficiency.

Special thanks to cassiespoeticnonsense, who took the time to read this and give me feedback, rather last minute too lol. Thanks a ton, darling!

Tell me what you think in the comments below or feel free to come flail about Hannigram things with me on tumblr!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!